

Ten Ways

TO EQUIP THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD – PERSONAL RHYTHMS



1 Peter 2:9 highlights that Christians have been made kings and priests – a royal priesthood – so that “we may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness,” with is the work of a prophet. The Holy Spirit equips every believer to be prophet, priest, and king – even if he or she lacks any specialized title as pastor, elder, or deacon. This is not to undermine the service of office-bearers. It is a proper elevation of the royal priesthood for the full functioning of the body of Christ.

Below are just ten simple tools pastors and ministry leaders can commend to their congregations to use throughout the week to help remind themselves of their baptismal identity as the royal priesthood throughout the week. **In order to access these resources, email: justin.g.carruthers@gmail.com.**

1 SIMPLE DAILY PRACTICES – REMEMBERING YOUR BAPTISM

Reformer Martin Luther crossed himself every day to remind himself of his baptism. He did so because he said it was both his greatest comfort as well as his greatest challenge to know his baptismal identity in Christ. It was a comfort because it was full of grace – “I belong to Jesus Christ who forgives our sins and gives life!” It was also a challenge because it reminded him of his vocational commission. It reminded him to ask himself each day, “Am I living up to my baptism as part of the royal priesthood today?” The action of crossing yourself is far less important than the reminder that it gives. But for Luther it was precisely the action that caused him to contemplate and meditate on both God’s grace as well as His purpose for his life. Consider new simple daily practices like a morning prayer, or visual reminders in your bedroom, kitchen, or office, etc. that remind you of your baptismal identity as a member of the royal priesthood.

2 BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

The whole process of a child’s spiritual formation flows from the reality of their baptismal identity. To baptize children means that we take responsibility to ensure that the name *Christian* has more significance and weight than the *surnames* that are on our kids’ birth certificates. Baptismal identity means all instruction and formation flows from an assurance of the prior gracious reality of God’s promises, which have claimed them. A baptismal identity is a covenantal identity, which means that they belong to Christ and his church and are called to be a royal priesthood. One such example is celebrating “Baptism Birthdays.” Since baptism marks our new birth in Christ, each year everyone in the family now has *two* birthdays. It’s an easy sell to kids since they now get twice as much cake and twice as many special days. On baptism birthdays, before cake, have a very short liturgy that reminds everyone present (not just the birthday boy/girl) the promises made in baptism and the new identity we have in and through it as a royal priesthood.

3 MINISTRY MATCHING – CONNECTING BEYOND THE FOUR WALLS

Be on the lookout for opportunities for your members to be connected to ministries and agencies outside of the four walls of the church building that correspond with their unique passions, gifts, and talents. In that way, you can function as a “bridge” between the church [the royal priesthood] and the community [and the ministries and agencies within it].

4 FAMILY MEALS WITH SACRAMENTAL OVERTONES

What would it look like for single adults and mom’s and dad’s to develop short liturgies that keep us grounded in our baptismal identity and the promises received through the sign and seal of communion? What would it do to a congregation if every family participated daily in remembering the Lord’s Supper? While the sacrament is still celebrated as a corporate body, families are, daily, remembering the covenant they have with God in Christ. What’s more, they are, daily, proclaiming their new identity in Him!

5 LECTIO DIVINA [DIVINE READING]

The most significant contribution of Martin Luther's Reformation and contribution to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was his insistence that Scripture is the place where the Lord speaks to *all* believers. It is Luther who reminds us that everything the heart and soul does – "hearing, speaking, composing, meditating, etc." is an act of prayer and service to God, rooted in our baptismal identity. Through baptism, God's people are ordained to share in Christ's status as readers of God's Word. Especially in an age when the reading of God's Word is on a downward trend in churches across North America, consider ways in which you can equip and inspire your congregation to engage in the daily practice of Lectio Divina. Provide annual reading plans with reminders for members to stay on track and/or utilizing a small group ministry with a commitment to God's Word and Prayer, etc.

6 PRAY, INVEST, INVITE [PI²]

An essential function of the royal priesthood is that they bring God to people. We do that by how we live, being God's holy presence in the world. People need to see human life shaped by love and peace and wisdom and joy. People need to see Christ living in us. As a community of faith, evangelism should be natural, not contrived. It should be rooted in our lives, not a box to check. Consider the PI2 model of evangelism — "Pray, Invest, and Invite"

Each member of your church is encouraged first to *pray* daily for four people in their life who do not know Jesus, to pray for open doors, boldness when a door opens, and clarity to speak. Second, they are encouraged to *invest* in their PI2 list. That is, they are encouraged to build authentic relationships with these four people. Third, they are stimulated to *invite* them to the next appropriate level of commitment (to church, bible study, go out for coffee, to trust Jesus).

7 THE MINISTRY OF FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION

How can the royal priesthood practice the sacrament of the Lord's Supper throughout the week? One way is through the sacred act of forgiveness and reconciliation. The daily ministry of forgiveness is our living, breathing participation in the covenant promises lived out in the Lord's Supper. In the act of forgiveness, we are called to remember the way in which we needed Christ's forgiveness, the covenant he made with us, the communion we receive through reconciliation, along with the anticipation we have when Christ returns to make all things new. Consider the ways in which you can educate, equip, and inspire your congregation to consider how the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is actively lived out through the weekly ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation.

8 INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Encourage your congregation to pray for their enemies – by name. Prayer for your enemies is one of the deepest forms of love, because it means that you actually have to really want for something good happen to them. It means sitting in the presence of God and interceding with God on behalf of that person. Perhaps you would pray for their conversion, or for God to soften their heart. Perhaps you would pray that they would be stopped in their downward spiral of sin. A perfect example of this intercessory prayer is in Luke 23:34 when Jesus hung on the cross and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." The amazing thing about this type of prayer is that it is absolutely impossible to hate someone you regularly lift up to God in prayer. Therefore, the royal priesthood ought to be encouraged: If there is someone you simply cannot forgive, start by praying for them.

9 DAILY REMINDERS – FOCUSING ON THE COST OF GOD'S MERCY

The apostle Paul writes, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" [2 Corinthians 5:21]. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He died the sinner's death so that we could have life. This is the gospel standard – "Forgive others as in Christ God forgave you." This is a vivid reminder that only those who have been overwhelmed by the grace of God will have the power to throw off all bitterness and resentment and unforgiveness and walk in the way of peace. Of course, it doesn't mean it will be easy. But now we will have the perspective to do to others what God has done infinitely more for us. That is why Jesus taught us how to pray: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." If we can understand the monumental debt that God has paid through Christ for us, now we will have the perspective to forgive our neighbor who sins against us.

10 ASSIGNMENT – DEVELOP A CUSTOMIZED FAMILY ACTION PLAN

Above are just nine practical ideas to use in seeking to equip the royal priesthood within their homes. But truth be told the single most effective process an adult, parents, and/or a family can engage in is to develop a customized family action plan. Imagine following this assignment: Sit down with your family to create an action plan that would result in meeting the challenge of reminding yourselves of your identity and the royal priesthood. It is inspiring. It is challenging. And it is a lot of fun!

Special Note: If your team does come up with more ideas for equipping the royal priesthood and you are willing to share them, please email justin.g.carruthers@gmail.com and they will be added to the database.